INMATE DEVICE AND USER INTERFACE FOR INMATE INITIATED VIDEO VISITATION SYSTEM

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 16/392,223 filed Apr. 23, 2019, which a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 15/788,542 filed Oct. 19, 2017; which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 14/842,611, filed on Sep. 1, 2015 and now issued U.S. Pat. No. 9,800,830; which is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/771,053 filed on Feb. 19, 2013 and now issued U.S. Pat. No. 9,124,763; which is a Continuation-in-Part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 13/363,498 filed Feb. 1, 2012 and now U.S. Pat. No. 9,094,569 (hereinafter the '569 Patent), the disclosures of which are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety.

FIELD

[0002] The present disclosure related to remote video and/or VoIP telephonic visitation and, more particularly, to an Internet-based system, enabling outside originated video and/or VoIP telephonic visitation from a remote site with incarcerated persons having a personal electronic device.

BACKGROUND

[0003] The statements in this section merely provide background information related to the present disclosure and may not constitute prior art.

[0004] When two parties want to communicate over great distances in real-time, the telephone has heretofore been the communication technology of choice. However, advancements in communication technologies over the past several years now allow both audio and video communication between parties over great distances, typically via the Internet. These forms of communication are commonly referred to as video conferencing. Modern video conferencing, depending on the complexity (and associated expense) of the equipment involved can provide virtually real-time communication among two or more parties.

[0005] Video conferencing typically requires local equipment associated with each person seeking to participate in the conference. When the conference is to be started, the equipment at each location is used to call in (e.g., "conference in") to a call center or the like. As each of these endpoints establishes a connection with the central location, the video and audio signals may then be accessed by all of the participants so that a conversation with both audio and video can take place. One common type of video conferencing equipment uses especially dedicated equipment at each geographic location for the participants. Such equipment typically uses an Integrated Services Digital Network (ISDN) or similar data connection to transmit and receive audio/video communication data during the video conference.

[0006] Unfortunately, conventionally available video conferencing equipment of the prior art has a common characteristic: each system requires initiation and/or termination of the communication at the visitor's and/or at the inmate's end (i.e., end point control. Such end point control is problematic when the video conferencing system used is a remote Internet-based visitation system where one participant is incarcerated (i.e., a prisoner in a jail, prison, penitentiary, etc.).

[0007] As used hereinafter, the term inmate will be applied to such incarcerated persons and the term prison will be used to refer to any and all facilities where an inmate may be incarcerated.

[0008] To allow an inmate to have unrestricted Internet access in order to gain end point control of a video visitation system is universally disallowed. Prisons do not want inmates to have unrestricted access to the Internet. Consequently, in such Internet-based systems of the prior art, prison personnel are required to be involved in audio/video and telephonic visitation initiation and termination.

[0009] However, the advantages of an Internet-based video visitation system in the prison environment are many. Often, an inmate is incarcerated in a location a great distance from his family or friends. Such distances often result in visitation of the inmate being inconvenient or even impossible due to travel time and expense for friends and family. Consequently, an audio/video conference with the inmate provides an alternative to an in-person visit.

[0010] As noted, the expense and complexity of traditional video visitation equipment, and associated personnel cost incurred by the prison to facilitate end point control is significant. A critically important aspect of end point control within the prison is the need to make sure that the correct inmate is communicating with the correct visitor. This issue is addressed as "positive party identification". A prison's Internet-based VoIP and video visitation system should provide positive identification of the parties to the communication. By means of illustration, it could be disastrous if a convicted child molester inmate was erroneously made a party to an incoming video visit from a minor child attempting to visit with another inmate.

[0011] Likewise, while inmate originated telephone calls to outside visitors are well known in the prior art, no system is known to the inventor that allows direct, incoming phone calls to an inmate, that is to say, without the need for intervention by prison personnel. Rather, only direct outgoing phone calls, from the inmate to the visitor, may be made. In addition, to take part in a phone call the visitor has to wait for an inmate to have access to an inmate phone, and then wait for the inmate to call. Of course the call can only be completed if the visitor is available.

[0012] The prior art discloses systems whereby an outside visitor may call in to an inmate in a prison. In such systems, prison personnel should locate the inmate and cause the inmate to move to an available inmate phone equipped to receive incoming telephone calls. Prison personnel then need to transfer the call to that phone once the inmate is in position to receive the call. Prison personnel then still need to monitor the call.

[0013] None of the known prior art means of communications maximize the recognized beneficial result of keeping an inmate connected with his family and loved ones. The presently available prior art means of communications do not allow visitors to initiate VoIP telecommunications or video visits directly with the particular inmate, spontaneously, at the visitor's convenience.

[0014] While traditional video conferencing equipment may be used in the prison environment, the above-mentioned problems are present. To illustrate the point; a VoIP telecommunication or video communication initiated out-